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The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom

July 28, 2006

President Bush. Thank you all. Prime Minister Tony Blair, welcome back to the White House. As you know, we've got a close relationship. You tell me what you think. You share with me your perspective—and you let me know when the microphone is on. *[Laughter]*

Today the Prime Minister and I talked about the ways we're working to advance freedom and human dignity across the world. Prime Minister Blair and I discussed the crisis in the Middle East. In Lebanon, Hizballah and its Iranian and Syrian sponsors are willing to kill and to use violence to stop the spread of peace and democracy—and they're not going to succeed.

The Prime Minister and I have committed our Governments to a plan to make every effort to achieve a lasting peace out of this crisis. Our top priorities in Lebanon are providing immediate humanitarian relief, achieving an end to the violence, ensuring the return of displaced persons, and assisting with reconstruction. We recognize that many Lebanese people have lost their homes, so we'll help rebuild the civilian infrastructure that will allow them to return home safely.

Our goal is to achieve a lasting peace, which requires that a free, democratic, and independent Lebanese Government be empowered to exercise full authority over its territory. We want a Lebanon free of militias and foreign interference, and a Lebanon that governs its own destiny, as is called for by U.N. Security Council Resolutions 1559 and 1680.

We agree that a multinational force must be dispatched to Lebanon quickly to augment a Lebanese Army as it moves to the south of that country. An effective multinational force will help speed delivery of humanitarian relief, facilitate the return of displaced persons, and support the Lebanese

Government as it asserts full sovereignty over its territory and guards its borders.

We're working quickly to achieve these goals. Tomorrow Secretary Rice will return to the region. She will work with the leaders of Israel and Lebanon to seize this opportunity to achieve lasting peace and stability for both of their countries. Next week, the U.N. Security Council will meet as well. Our goal is a Chapter VII resolution setting out a clear framework for cessation of hostilities on an urgent basis and mandating the multinational force.

Also at the United Nations, senior officials from many countries will meet to discuss the design and deployment of the multinational force. Prime Minister Blair and I agree that this approach gives the best hope to end the violence and create lasting peace and stability in Lebanon. This approach will demonstrate the international community's determination to support the Government of Lebanon and defeat the threat from Hizballah and its foreign sponsors.

This approach will make possible what so many around the world want to see: the end of Hizballah's attacks on Israel; the return of Israeli soldiers taken hostage by the terrorists; the suspension of Israel's operations in Lebanon; and the withdrawal of Israeli forces.

This is a moment of intense conflict in the Middle East. Yet our aim is to turn it into a moment of opportunity and a chance for a broader change in the region. Prime Minister Blair and I remain committed to the vision of two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. This vision has been embraced by Israel, the Palestinians, and many others throughout the region and the world, and we will make every effort to make this vision a reality. The United States is committed to using all of its influence to seize this moment to build a stable and democratic Middle East.

We also talked about other regions and other challenges and other conflicts. The Prime Minister and I each met with the Prime Minister of Iraq this week. The U.S. and U.K. are working together to support the Prime Minister and his unity Government, and we will continue to support that Government. Afghanistan's people and their freely-

elected Government can also count on our support.

Our two nations urge Iran to accept the EU-3 offer, which also has the backing of Russia, China, and the United States. We agree that the Iranian regime will not be allowed to develop or acquire nuclear weapons.

The suffering in Darfur deserves the name of genocide. Our two nations support a United Nations peacekeeping mission in Darfur, which is the best hope for the people in that region.

I want to thank you for coming. It's good to discuss these urgent matters with you. We will continue to consult with each other as events unfold in the Middle East and beyond. The alliance between Britain and America is stronger than ever, because we share the same values; we share the same goals; and we share the same determination to advance freedom and to defeat terror across the world.

Mr. Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Blair. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you for your welcome to the White House once again. And first of all, I'd like to say some words about the present Middle East crisis, and then we'll talk about some of the other issues that we discussed.

What is happening in the Middle East at the moment is a complete tragedy for Lebanon, for Israel, and for the wider region. And the scale of destruction is very clear. There are innocent lives that have been lost, both Lebanese and Israeli. There are hundreds of thousands of people that have been displaced from their homes, again, both in Lebanon and in Israel. And it's been a tremendous and terrible setback for Lebanon's democracy.

We shouldn't forget how this began, how it started. In defiance of the U.N. Resolution 1559, Hizballah, for almost 2 years, has been fortifying and arming militia down in the south of Lebanon, when it is the proper and democratically elected Government of Lebanon and its armed forces who should have control of that area, as they should of the whole of Lebanon. They then, in defiance of that U.N. resolution, crossed the U.N. Blue Line. As you know, they kidnaped two Israeli soldiers; they killed eight more. Then,

of course, there was the retaliation by Israel, and there are rockets being fired from the south of Lebanon into the north of Israel the entire time.

So we know how this situation came about and how it started, and the question is, now, how to get it stopped and get it stopped with the urgency that the situation demands.

Since our meeting in St. Petersburg for the G-8, we have been working hard on a plan to ensure that this happens. And as well as, obviously, the consultations that I've had with President Bush, I've spoken to President Chirac, Chancellor Merkel, Prime Minister Erdogan of Turkey, the President of the European Union, the Prime Minister of Finland, and many, many others.

And as the President has just outlined to you, I think there are three essential steps that we can take in order to ensure that there is the cessation of hostilities we all want to see. The first is, I welcome very much the fact that Secretary Rice will go back to the region tomorrow. She will have with her the package of proposals in order to get agreement both from the Government of Israel and the Government of Lebanon on what is necessary to happen in order for this crisis to stop.

Secondly, we are bringing forward to Monday the meeting in the United Nations about the international stabilization force. And again, this is something we've been discussing with various different countries over the past few days. The absolute vital importance of that force is that it is able to ensure that the agreement the international community comes to, in respect of Lebanon, is enforced and that we have the Government of Lebanon able to make its writ run fully with its own armed forces in the south of Lebanon.

And then thirdly, as the President has just said to you, we want to see, tabled and agreed, a U.N. resolution as early as possible that will allow the cessation of hostilities. Provided that resolution is agreed and acted upon, we can, indeed, bring an end to this crisis. But nothing will work unless, as well as an end to the immediate crisis, we put in place the measures necessary to prevent it occurring again.

That is why I return at every opportunity to the basis of the United Nations Resolution 1559—almost 2 years ago now—that said precisely what should happen in order to make sure that the southern part of Lebanon was not used as a base for armed militia. The purpose of what we are doing, therefore, is to bring about, yes, the cessation of hostilities, which we want to see as quickly and as urgently as possible, but also to put in place a framework that allows us to stabilize the situation for the medium and longer term.

In addition to that, we, both of us, believe it is important that we take the opportunity to ensure that the Middle East peace process, which has been in such difficulty over the past few months, is given fresh impetus towards the two-state solution that we in the international community want to see. In the end, that is of fundamental importance, also, to the stability and peace of the region.

Now, in addition to all of these things—and obviously, we discussed Iraq, as the President has just said, and the work that our troops are doing in Iraq and, indeed, in Afghanistan. And if I might, let me once again pay tribute to the quite extraordinary professionalism, dedication, bravery, and commitment of the Armed Forces of both the United States and the United Kingdom and the many other countries that are working there with us.

In addition to that, as the President indicated to you, we discussed the situation in the Sudan. We will have an opportunity to discuss other issues later, notably, obviously the world trade talks and other such things. But I want to emphasize, just in concluding my opening remarks, by referring once again to the absolutely essential importance of ensuring that not merely do we get the cessation of hostilities now in Lebanon and in respect of Israel but that we take this opportunity—since we know why this has occurred; we know what started it; we know what the underlying forces are behind what has happened in the past few weeks—we take this opportunity to set out and achieve a different strategic direction for the whole of that region, which will allow the Government of Lebanon to be in control of its country, Lebanon to be the democracy its people

want, and also allow us to get the solution in respect of Palestine that we have wanted so long to see.

If we are able, out of what has been a tragedy, a catastrophe for many of the people in the region, to achieve such a thing, then we will have turned what has been a situation of tragedy into one of opportunity. And we intend to do that.

President Bush. Good job.

Three questions a side. Tom [Tom Raum, Associated Press].

Situation in the Middle East/War on Terror

Q. Mr. President, Mr. Prime Minister, with support apparently growing among the Arab population, both Shi'a and Sunni, for Hizballah by bounds, is there a risk that every day that goes by without a cease-fire will tip this conflict into a wider war?

And, Mr. President, when Secretary Rice goes back to the region, will she have any new instructions, such as meeting with Syrians?

President Bush. Her instructions are to work with Israel and Lebanon to get a—to come up with an acceptable U.N. Security Council resolution that we can table next week. And secondly, it's really important for people to understand that terrorists are trying to stop the advance of freedom, and therefore, it's essential that we do what's right and not necessarily what appears to be immediately popular.

There's a lot of suffering in Lebanon because Hizballah attacked Israel. There's a lot of suffering in the Palestinian Territory because militant Hamas is trying to stop the advance of democracy. There is suffering in Iraq because terrorists are trying to spread sectarian violence and stop the spread of democracy. And now is the time for the free world to work to create the conditions so that people everywhere can have hope.

And those are the stakes; that's what we face right now. We've got a plan to deal with this immediate crisis. It's one of the reasons the Prime Minister came, to talk about that plan. But the stakes are larger than just Lebanon.

Isn't it interesting, that when Prime Minister Olmert starts to reach out to President

Abbas to develop a Palestinian state, militant Hamas creates the conditions so that there's crisis, and then Hizballah follows up? Isn't it interesting, as a democracy takes hold in Iraq, that Al Qaida steps up its efforts to murder and bomb in order to stop the democracy?

And so one of the things that the people in the Middle East must understand is that we're working to create the conditions of hope and opportunity for all of them. And we'll continue to do that, Tom. That's—this is the challenge of the 21st century.

Prime Minister Blair. It's very obvious what the strategy of terrorism is, and of the actions that Hizballah took. Their strategy is to commit an outrage that provokes a reaction and then on the back of the reaction, to mobilize extreme elements and then try and create a situation which even moderate people feel drawn to their cause. That's the strategy.

And you, quite rightly, say, "Well, isn't there a danger that the Arab street and people in Arab Muslim countries become more sympathetic to Hizballah as a result of what's happened?" That is their strategy. How do we counter it? We counter it, one, by having our own strategy to bring the immediate crisis to an end, which we do. That is what is important about the Secretary of State visiting the region, getting an agreement, tabling it to the United Nations, getting the endorsement of the United Nations, having an international stabilization force to move into the situation. We've got to deal with the immediate situation.

But then, as the President was saying a moment or two ago, we've then got to realize what has happened in the past few weeks is not an isolated incident. It is part of a bigger picture. Now, I'm going to say some more things about this in the days to come, but we really will never understand how we deal with this situation unless we understand that there is a big picture out in the Middle East which is about reactionary and terrorist groups trying to stop what the vast majority of people in the Middle East want, which is progress towards democracy, liberty, human rights, the same as the rest of us.

Now, that's the battle that's going on. And, yes, it is always very difficult when something

like this happens, as it has happened over the past few weeks. So we've got to resolve the immediate situation, but we shouldn't be in any doubt at all, that will be a temporary respite unless we put in place the longer-term framework.

Lebanon/United Nations Security Council Resolution 1559

Q. Mr. President, you spoke of having a plan to rebuild houses in Lebanon. Wouldn't the people of Lebanon rather know when you're going to tell the Israelis to stop destroying houses?

And, Prime Minister, you've talked of having a plan today, but isn't the truth that you and the President believe that Israel is on the right side in the war on terror and you want them to win this war, not to stop it?

President Bush. Look, we care deeply about the people whose lives have been affected in Lebanon, just like we care deeply about the people whose lives have been affected in Israel. There's over a million people in Israel that are threatened by this consistent rocket attack coming out of Lebanon. And, yes, we want to help people rebuild their lives, absolutely. But we also want to address the root causes of the problem, and the root cause of the problem is, you've got Hizballah that is armed and willing to fire rockets into Israel—a Hizballah, by the way, that I firmly believe is backed by Iran and encouraged by Iran.

And so for the sake of long-term stability, we've got to deal with this issue now. Listen, the temptation is to say, "It's too tough; let's just try to solve it quickly with something that won't last; let's just get it off the TV screens." But that won't solve the problem. And it's certainly not going to help the Lebanese citizens have a life that is normal and peaceful.

What is necessary is to help the Siniora Government, and one way to help the Siniora Government is to make aid available to help rebuild the houses that were destroyed. Another way to help the Siniora Government is to implement 1559, which is the disarmament of armed militia inside his country.

And I—look, we care deeply about the lives that have been affected on both sides of this issue, just like I care deeply about the innocent people who are being killed in

Iraq and people being denied a state in the Palestinian Territory. But make no mistake about it, it is the goal and aims of the terrorist organizations to stop that type of advance. That's what they're trying to do. They're trying to evoke sympathy for themselves. They're not sympathetic people. They're violent, cold-blooded killers who are trying to stop the advance of freedom.

And this is the calling of the 21st century, it seems like to me, and now is the time to confront the problem. And of course, we're going to help the people in Lebanon rebuild their lives. But as Tony said, this conflict started, out of the blue, with two Israeli soldiers kidnapped and rockets being fired across the border.

Now, we have urged restraint. We made it clear that we care about wanton destruction. On the other hand, in my judgment, it would be a big mistake not to solve the underlying problems. Otherwise, everything will seem fine, and then you'll be back at a press conference saying, "How come you didn't solve the underlying problems?"

Prime Minister Blair. We feel deeply for people in Lebanon and people in Israel who are the innocent casualties of this conflict; of course, we do. And we want it to stop, and we want it to stop now. And what we're putting forward today is actually a practical plan that would lead to a U.N. resolution—could be early next week—that would allow it, put in place the conditions for it to stop.

But what we've also got to do is to make sure that we recognize that this action wasn't simply aimed against Israel, and then Israel retaliated. It was also aimed against the proper Government of Lebanon being able to control its own country. And the very reason why, 2 years ago, the international community passed this resolution was because people could see that what was going to happen in southern Lebanon was that these Hizballah militias, that are armed and financed by Iran and by Syria, were going to move into the south of the country in order to be a focus of terrorism and discontent.

Now, that is the fact. And of course, all of us are appalled at the destruction and loss of life; of course, we are. And that's why we've actually come together today with a viable plan—if people can agree it, as I be-

lieve they can—to get it stopped. But once you stop this violence happening now—which, of course, we should do—once you do, it doesn't alter the underlying reality unless we've got a framework that allows us to put the Government of Lebanon properly back in charge of its own country; unless we've got the commitment to take forward the Israel-Palestine two-state deal, which is there and which everyone wants to see; and then if we can—unless we mobilize the international community, to deal with the threat that Iran poses.

And there's no other way out of this. We're not—we can, all of us, make whatever statements we want to do, use whatever words we want to do, but the brutal reality of the situation is that we're only going to get violence stopped and stability introduced on the basis of clear principles.

Now, as I say, we've set out a way to do this. But it requires the long term, as well as the short term.

Multinational Peacekeeping Force in Lebanon

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. On the issue of the multinational force, what shape should it take; who should lead it; who should be part of it? And also, should Hizballah agreeing to it be a precondition for setting up the force?

And, Mr. Prime Minister, you talked about a resolution leading to a cessation of hostilities, and I'm just wondering, should it include a call for an immediate cease-fire?

President Bush. In terms of the troops, that's what the meeting Monday is going to be about. And this is one of these issues that requires international consensus. People will put forth ideas, and we'll participate in terms of trying to help develop a consensus about what the force ought to look like.

In a general sense, though, the force needs to serve as a complement to a Lebanese force. See, that's the whole purpose of the force, is to strengthen the Lebanese Government by helping the Lebanese force move into the area. The whole cornerstone of the policy for Lebanon is for Lebanon to be free and able to govern herself and defend herself with a viable force.

And so one of the things you'll see in discussions there is, how do we help the Lebanese Army succeed? What does it—what's required? What's the manpower need to be in order to help this force move into the south so the government can take control of the country. What it looks like—if I hold a press conference on Tuesday, I'll be able to answer that better. But since I probably won't be, read your newspaper.

Q. What about Hizballah—

President Bush. That's a part of the conditions that they'll be discussing. That's what they'll be talking about. The key is to have Lebanon agree with it. And the key is to have Israel agree with it. Those are the two parties. Hizballah is not a state. They're a supposed political party that happens to be armed. Now, what kind of state is it that has got a political party that has got a militia? It's a state that needs to be helped, is what that is. And we need to help the Siniora Government deal with a political party that is armed, that gets its arms and help from other parts of the world—in order for Lebanon's democracy to succeed.

A lot has changed in Lebanon. It wasn't all that long ago that Lebanon was occupied by Syria. And we came together and worked in the U.N. Security Council, and Syria is now out of Lebanon. But part of the resolution that enabled Syria to get out was that Hizballah would disarm. And if we truly want peace in the region, we've got to follow through on that 1559, and that's what the whole strategy is. And part of the peacekeepers will be to—or the multinational force, whatever you call them, will be in there trying to help the Government.

Prime Minister Blair. Just on the international force, the thing that's very important to realize is that the purpose of it, obviously, is to help stabilize the situation. But it's also to allow the Government of Lebanon's true armed forces to come down from the north and occupy the south themselves. In other words, the purpose of the force is almost as a bridge between the north and the south, in order to allow the forces of the Government of Lebanon to come down and do what Resolution 1559 always anticipated would happen.

And as for your second question, yes, of course, the U.N. resolution, the passing of it, the agreeing of it can be the occasion for the end of hostilities if it's acted upon and agreed upon. And that requires not just the Government of Israel and the Government of Lebanon, obviously, to abide by it but also for the whole of the international community to exert the necessary pressure so that there is the cessation of hostilities on both sides. Now, that will be important also in making it very clear to Hizballah and those that back Hizballah that they have to allow the stabilization force to enter.

But, yes, of course—look, anybody with any human feeling for what is going on there wants this to stop as quickly as possible. And we have a process that allows us to do this, but it's got to be acted on. It's not just going to be agreed in theory; it's got to be acted on too.

Iran/Syria

Q. Thank you. Mr. President and Prime Minister Blair, can I ask you both tonight what your messages are for the Governments of Iran and Syria, given that you say this is the crisis of the 21st century?

President Bush. Want me to start? My message is, give up your nuclear weapon and your nuclear weapon ambitions. That's my message to Syria—I mean, to Iran. And my message to Syria is, become an active participant in the neighborhood for peace.

Prime Minister Blair. The message is very, very simple to them. It is that you have a choice. Iran and Syria have a choice. And they may think that they can avoid this choice; in fact, they can't. And when things are set in train like what has happened in Lebanon over the past few weeks, it only, in my view, underscores the fact they have this choice. They can either come in and participate as proper and responsible members of the international community, or they will face the risk of increasing confrontation.

And coming in and being proper members of the international community does not mean—though I would love to see both Syria and Iran proper democracies—does not mean to say that we insist that they change their government or even their system of government, although, of course, we want to see

change in those countries. But it does mean Iran abides by its obligations under the nuclear weapons treaty. It does mean that Iran and Syria stop supporting terrorism. It does mean that instead of trying to prevent the democratically elected government of Iraq fulfill its mandate, they allow it to fulfill its mandate.

Now, that's their choice. It's a perfectly simple one. They can either decide they are going to abide by the rules of the international community or continue to transgress them. And, look, in the end, that's the choice that they will have to make. But where I think they make a strategic miscalculation is if they think that because of all the other issues that we have to resolve and so on, that we are indifferent to what they are doing. There will be no sidetracking of our determination, for example, to make sure that Iran is fully compliant with the call that's been made on them from the whole of the international community in respect of nuclear weapons capability. And I hope they realize there is a different relationship that is possible with the international community, but only on the basis that has been set out.

President Bush. David Gregory [NBC News].

Iraq/American Influence Abroad/War on Terror

Q. Thank you. Mr. President, both of you, I'd like to ask you about the big picture that you're discussing. Mr. President, 3 years ago, you argued that an invasion of Iraq would create a new stage of Arab-Israeli peace. And yet today, there is an Iraqi Prime Minister who has been sharply critical of Israel. Arab governments, despite your arguments, who first criticized Hizballah, have now changed their tune; now they're sharply critical of Israel. And despite, from both of you, warnings to Syria and Iran to back off support from Hizballah, effectively, Mr. President, your words are being ignored. So what has happened to America's clout in this region that you've committed yourself to transform?

President Bush. David, it's an interesting period because instead of having foreign policies based upon trying to create a sense of stability, we have a foreign policy that ad-

dresses the root causes of violence and instability.

For a while, American foreign policy was just, let's hope everything is calm—kind of managed calm. But beneath the surface brewed a lot of resentment and anger that was manifested in it—on September the 11th. And so we've taken a foreign policy that says, on the one hand, we will protect ourselves from further attack in the short run by being aggressive and chasing down the killers and bringing them to justice—and make no mistake, they're still out there, and they would like to harm our respective peoples because of what we stand for—in the long term, to defeat this ideology, and they're bound by an ideology. You defeat it with a more hopeful ideology called freedom.

And, look, I fully understand some people don't believe it's possible for freedom and democracy to overcome this ideology of hatred. I understand that. I just happen to believe it is possible, and I believe it will happen. And so what you're seeing is a clash of governing styles. For example, the notion of democracy beginning to emerge scares the ideologs, the totalitarians, those who want to impose their vision. It just frightens them, and so they respond. They've always been violent.

I hear this amazing, kind of, editorial thought that says, all of a sudden Hizballah has become violent because we're promoting democracy. They have been violent for a long period of time. Or Hamas—one reason why the Palestinians still suffer is because there are militants who refuse to accept a Palestinian state based upon democratic principles.

And so what the world is seeing is a desire by this country and our allies to defeat the ideology of hate with an ideology that has worked and that brings hope. And one of the challenges, of course, is to convince people that Muslims would like to be free, that there's other people other than people in Britain and America that would like to be free in the world. There's this kind of almost—kind of, weird kind of elitism that says, well, maybe certain people in certain parts of the world shouldn't be free; maybe it's best just to let them sit in these tyrannical

societies. And our foreign policy rejects that concept. We don't accept it.

And so we're working. And this is—as I said the other day, when these attacks took place, I said this should be a moment of clarity for people to see the stakes in the 21st century. I mean, there's an unprovoked attack on a democracy. Why? I happen to believe because progress is being made toward democracies. And I believe that—I also believe that Iran would like to exert additional influence in the region. A theocracy would like to spread its influence using surrogates.

And so I'm as determined as ever to continue fostering a foreign policy based upon liberty. And I think it's going to work unless we lose our nerve and quit. And this government isn't going to quit.

Q. I asked you about the loss of American influence, and are you worried about that?

President Bush. Well, David, we went to the G-8 and worked with our allies and got a remarkable statement on what took place. We're working to get a United Nations resolution on Iran. We're working to have a Palestinian state. But the reason why—you asked the question—is because terrorists are trying to stop that progress. And we'll ultimately prevail, because they have—their ideology is so dark and so dismal that when people really think about it, it will be rejected. They just got a different tool to use than we do: They kill innocent lives to achieve objectives. That's what they do. And they're good. They get on the TV screens, and they get people to ask questions about, well, this, that, or the other. I mean, they're able to kind of say to people, "Don't come and bother us because we will kill you."

And my attitude is, is that now is the time to be firm. And we've got a great weapon on our side, and that is freedom and liberty. And it's got—those two concepts have got the capacity to defeat ideologies of hate.

Prime Minister Blair. I don't think, actually, it's anything to do with a loss of American influence at all. I think we've got to go back and ask what changed policy, because policy has changed in the past few years. And what changed policy was September the 11th. That changed policy, but actually, before September the 11th this global movement with a global ideology was already in

being. September the 11th was the culmination of what they wanted to do. But actually—and this is probably where the policy-makers, such as myself, were truly in error—is that even before September the 11th, this was happening in all sorts of different ways in different countries.

I mean, in Algeria, for example, tens and tens of thousands of people lost their lives. This movement has grown; it is there; it will latch on to any cause that it possibly can and give it a dimension of terrorism and hatred. You can see this. You can see it in Kashmir, for example. You can see it in Chechnya. You can see it in Palestine.

Now, what is its purpose? Its purpose is to promote its ideology based upon the perversion of Islam and to use any methods at all, but particularly terrorism, to do that, because they know that the value of terrorism to them is—as I was saying a moment or two ago, it's not simply the act of terror; it's the chain reaction that terror brings with it. Terrorism brings the reprisal; the reprisal brings the additional hatred; the additional hatred breeds the additional terrorism, and so on. Look, in a small way, we lived through that in Northern Ireland over many, many decades.

Now, what happened after September the 11th—and this explains, I think, the President's policy, but also the reason why I have taken the view and still take the view that Britain and America should remain strong allies, shoulder to shoulder in fighting this battle, is that we are never going to succeed unless we understand they are going to fight hard. The reason why they are doing what they're doing in Iraq at the moment—and, yes, it's really tough as a result of it—is because they know that if, right in the center of the Middle East in an Arab, Muslim country, you've got a nonsectarian democracy, in other words people weren't governed either by religious fanatics or secular dictators, you've got a genuine democracy of the people—how does their ideology flourish in such circumstances?

So they have imported the terrorism into that country, preyed on whatever reactionary elements there are to boost it. And that's why we have the issue there; that's why the

Taliban are trying to come back in Afghanistan. That is why, the moment it looked as if you could get progress in Israel and Palestine, it had to be stopped. That's the moment when, as they saw there was a problem in Gaza, so they realized, well, there's a possibility now we can set Lebanon against Israel.

Now, it's a global movement; it's a global ideology. And if there's any mistake that's ever made in these circumstances, it's if people are surprised that it's tough to fight, because you're up against an ideology that's prepared to use any means at all, including killing any number of wholly innocent people.

And I don't dispute part of the implication of your question at all, in the sense that you look at what is happening in the Middle East and what is happening in Iraq and Lebanon and Palestine, and, of course, there's a sense of shock and frustration and anger at what is happening, and grief at the loss of innocent lives. But it is not a reason for walking away. It's a reason for staying the course and staying it no matter how tough it is, because the alternative is actually letting this ideology grip larger and larger numbers of people.

And it is going to be difficult. Look, we've got a problem even in our own Muslim communities in Europe, who will half-buy into some of the propaganda that's pushed at it—the purpose of America is to suppress Islam, Britain has joined with America in the suppression of Islam. And one of the things we've got to stop doing is stop apologizing for our own positions. Muslims in America, as far as I'm aware of, are free to worship; Muslims in Britain are free to worship. We are plural societies.

It's nonsense; the propaganda is nonsense. And we're not going to defeat this ideology until we in the West go out with sufficient confidence in our own position and say this is wrong. It's not just wrong in its methods; it's wrong in its ideas; it's wrong in its ideology; it's wrong in every single wretched reactionary thing about it. And it will be a long struggle, I'm afraid. But there's no alternative but to stay the course with it. And we will.

Situation in the Middle East

Q. Can I ask you both how soon realistically you think there could be an end to the

violence, given there's no signs at the moment of 1559 being met? I mean, do you think we're looking at more weeks, months, or can it be achieved sooner than that? And also, will the multinational force potentially be used to effect a cease-fire or simply to police an agreement once we eventually get to that?

Prime Minister Blair. Well, the answer to the first point is, as soon as possible. And if we can get the U.N. resolution agreed next week and acted upon, then it can happen, and it can happen then. We want to see it happen as quickly as possible, but the conditions have got to be in place to allow it to happen.

And in relation to the multinational force, what will be—it's not going to be the opportunity to fight—to fight their way in. But the very way that you posed that question underlines this basic point, which is, this can only work if Hizballah are prepared to allow it to work. And we've got to make sure, therefore, that we have the force go in as part of an agreement that the Government of Lebanon have bound itself to, the Government of Israel has bound itself to, the international community has bound itself to. And Hizballah have got to appreciate that if they stand out against that, then it's not really that they will be doing a huge disservice to the people of Lebanon, but they will also, again, face the fact that action will have to be taken against them.

President Bush. We share the same urgency of trying to stop the violence. It's why Condi Rice went out there very quickly. Her job is to, first and foremost, was to make it clear to the Lebanese people that we wanted to send aid and help and help work on the corridors necessary to get the aid to the Lebanese people. And she's coming back to the region tonight, will be there tomorrow. I could have called her back here and could have sat around, visited, and talked. But I thought it was important for her to go back to the region to work on a United Nations Security Council resolution.

So, like the Prime Minister, I would like to end this as quickly as possible as well. Having said that, I want to make sure that we address the root cause of the problem. And I believe the plan that Tony and I discussed

will yield exactly what we want, and that is addressing the root cause of the problem.

Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 12:36 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq; Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel; President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority; and Prime Minister Fuad Siniora of Lebanon. Prime Minister Blair referred to President Jacques Chirac of France; Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany; Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey; and Prime Minister Matti Taneli Vanhanen and Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja of Finland, whose country currently holds the Council of the European Union Presidency.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

July 22

In the morning, at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, the President had an intelligence briefing.

July 23

In the morning, the President returned to Washington, DC.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Minister of Foreign Affairs Saud al-Faysal bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with 2006 Tour de France winner Floyd Landis to congratulate him on his victory.

July 24

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, he met with soldiers injured in Iraq and presented Purple Hearts to four of them.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President participated in a signing ceremony for Public Law 109-243, the Freedom to Display the American Flag Act of 2005.

In the evening, at the historic Evermay house, the President attended a Republican National Committee reception.

The White House announced that the President will meet with Sudan Liberation Movement Army Leader Minni Minawi at the White House on July 25.

July 25

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Old Family Dining Room, the President had a working lunch with Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Sudan Liberation Movement Army Leader Minni Minawi. He then met with Republican congressional leaders to discuss legislative priorities.

The President announced his intention to nominate Margrethe Lundsager to be U.S. Executive Director of the International Monetary Fund.

The President announced his intention to nominate Ronald A. Tschetter to be Director of the Peace Corps.

The President announced his intention to nominate Dianne I. Moss to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation.

The President announced his intention to appoint W. Craig Vanderwagen as Assistant Secretary for Public Health Emergency Preparedness at the Department of Health and Human Services.

The President announced his intention to designate Stephen R. Larson as Acting General Counsel for the Department of the Treasury.

The President announced his intention to designate Arthur T. Hopkins as Acting Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Nuclear and Chemical and Biological Defense Programs.

The President announced his designation of Ronald J. James as Acting Chief Human Capital Officer at the Department of Homeland Security.